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Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund

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Agenda item 5
Reports to the Economic and Social Council

Draft report

UNDP

1. The Associate Administrator introduced the report of the Administrator to the Economic and Social Council (DP/2001/6), noting that UNDP, UNFPA, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had agreed on a common format and approach for their respective reports to the Council. The report was an important contribution to the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities to be undertaken by the General Assembly later in the year. It was clear that UNDP had made considerable headway towards meeting the directives of Assembly legislation such as those contained in resolution 53/192. With other members of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and in turn the broader United Nations system, UNDP was assisting the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the assessment of progress achieved in response to resolution 53/192. Coordinated inputs would be provided to the Council at its substantive session 2001.

2. The report highlighted progress made in the reform of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and its subsidiary bodies and the streamlining of UNDG through the introduction of "sunset clauses" for its working groups. The area of funding and resources was examined in light of the introduction of the multi-year funding framework and results-oriented annual report, as well as the UNDP Ministerial Meeting, held in September 2000. Significant progress was noted in the areas of the resident coordinator system, and with regard to the implementation of the common country assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). In that regard, partnership with the Bretton Woods institutions at the country level was a high priority, in particular through collaboration with the World Bank in the context of the Comprehensive Development Framework, the poverty-reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), and the CCA/UNDAF, and the interrelationships between those instruments.

3. Other areas addressed in the report included the harmonization of programming periods and procedures, gender-mainstreaming, gender balance, capacity-building, common premises and services, monitoring and evaluation, follow-up to international conferences, and the follow-up to special economic, humanitarian and disaster-relief assistance.

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Comments by delegations

4. Several delegations praised the common format presented by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in their reports to the ECOSOC, as well as the fact that the reports were presented at the first regular sessions of the respective Executive Boards. The reports were seen as useful contributions to the discussion that would take place at the Council's substantive session for 2001 and to the triennial comprehensive policy review process.

5. The strong focus on implementation of the reform programme of the Secretary-General was welcomed. The High-Level Programme Committee (HLPC) was considered a good initiative. One delegation asked for clarification regarding the different language used in documents DP/2001/6 and DP/FPA/2001/1 regarding the "sunset clauses" of the UNDG working groups.

6. One delegation noted that the reference in paragraph 10 (c) to a continued decline in core funding in "other funds and programmes" was not accurate. Another delegation underlined its support for paragraph 10 (d) in which it was suggested that the ECOSOC make recommendations on the future of the United Nations pledging conference, taking into account the experience gained at the second funding meeting at the second regular session 2000 of the Executive Board, as well as the experience of other funds and programmes.

7. Several delegations noted that, while 93 programme countries had harmonized their programming cycles, completely different country programmes or country cooperation frameworks had been submitted to the respective Executive Boards of the funds and programmes at their first regular sessions 2001. Moreover, in spite of harmonized programming cycles, there had been little evidence of collaborative programming at the country level. In that regard, speakers requested further information on the progress achieved by the UNDG Working Group on Harmonization and Simplification of Programming Processes and Approval at the annual session 2001, when the Executive Board would receive a progress report on follow-up to decision 2000/12. There was also a need to continue to streamline programming, administrative and financial guidelines. The need for greater harmonization of programming periods and procedures with budgetary processes and national planning cycles was underlined.

8. Further efforts to streamline programming instruments as progress was achieved in introducing CCAs and UNDAFs was encouraged, in particular in order to relieve the burden of already overstretched national capacities. In addition, there should be clear references to the CCA and UNDAF in UNDP country cooperation frameworks and UNFPA country programmes and how they related to one another in terms of goals, objectives and partnerships agreed upon by the country team and the Government. A clear linkage between UNDAF goals and international development goals was sought. Some speakers underlined the leadership role of national governments in programming at the country level and in the follow-up to international conferences.

9. Several delegations reaffirmed their support for closer collaboration at the country level between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. The importance of the overall coordination role of national authorities was emphasized. One delegation cited its Government's intention to monitor and report on the results of field-level collaboration between the United Nations system

and the Bretton Woods institutions. Speakers also called for greater linkage between the CCA/UNDAF, the CDF and the PRSPs, where applicable.

10. Speakers called for further progress in mainstreaming gender considerations in operational activities for development. One delegation suggested building on the experience of the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

11. Many delegations cited the lack of progress in addressing gender balance in the senior ranks of UNDP and in particular among resident coordinators. One delegation requested further information on how UNDP intended to reach the targets that had been set for achieving gender balance.

12. One delegation requested that the wording in paragraph 74 (a) be amended to read: "Take note of document DP/2001/4 on the role of UNDP in crisis and post-conflict situations, as well as the comments made by members of the Executive Board, along with the approaches of partner funds and programmes contained in their respective reports to the Council."

13. The representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization underlined the need to strengthen the CCA and UNDAF processes. She also cited the important role of UNDP as the coordinator of the United Nations system and the vital importance of the United Nations system support for policy and programme development and support for technical services. The issue of gender balance among resident coordinators was a sensitive issue, in particular because many organizations did not have or were unwilling to release women at the senior level.

Response of the Administration

14. The Associate Administrator, in response to the comments made, noted that there was no discrepancy between UNDP and UNFPA with regard to views on the "sunset clauses" of the UNDG sub-groups. With regard to gender balance, he explained that the appointment of resident coordinators was carried out through an inter-agency mechanism, and that all sponsoring organizations were encouraged to place women in the pool of resident coordinator candidates. He noted that 48 per cent of candidates for the most recent assessment programme for resident coordinator competencies were women. However, those candidates needed to pass the assessment and also be available to serve. He confirmed that there would continue to be greater dialogue with the World Bank at the country level. He also confirmed that the future country cooperation frameworks would include the inputs of CCA and UNDAF processes where applicable. He underlined that 22 UNDAFs had been approved, with 17 in progress. While there had been some delays due to individual country situations, UNDP was committed to moving forcefully. He informed the Executive Board that there were UNDG guidelines for joint programming, especially for those who had approved the UNDAF.

15. The Executive Board took note of the UNDP report to the Economic and Social Council (DP/2001/6) and the comments made thereon and decided to transmit them to the Council.

UNFPA

16. In his introduction of the report of the Executive Director to the Economic and Social Council (DP/FPA/2001/1), the Director of the Strategic Planning and Coordination Division emphasized that the report was presented in a format jointly agreed by UNDP, UNFPA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and focused on the implementation of United Nations reforms, the forthcoming triennial policy review of the Council, the follow-up to international conferences and on humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. In particular, the triennial policy review would focus on the common country assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The Director stated that these two mechanisms, if carried out well, would provide critical opportunities to strengthen the national capacity of programme countries in a coordinated and complementary manner.

Comments by delegations

17. In commenting on the report, several delegations said that they had found it to be both useful and informative. One delegation questioned a seeming discrepancy between the report of UNFPA and that of UNDP on the effectiveness of "sunset clauses" concerning the working groups of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). The same delegation also noted that the goal of developing 32 UNDAFs by 2000 had not been achieved. Several delegations noted the importance of mainstreaming gender into the CCAs and UNDAFs and of increasing the number of women who served as resident coordinators. In that regard, UNFPA was commended in coming very close to achieving a gender balance in its professional staff (48 per cent), a better record than most other United Nations organizations. Delegations echoed the comments of the Director in speaking of the potential value of the CCAs and UNDAFs in promoting national capacity-building, especially regarding the follow-up to international conferences.

18. In discussing the harmonization of the programmes of United Nations organizations, one delegation noted that, although a large number of programming cycles had been harmonized, the schedule for presentation of country programmes to their respective Boards seemed not to coincide at all. The delegation hoped that proposals being developed on the programming process by a working group headed by UNFPA would address that concern. The same delegation also expressed its desire that the UNFPA Country Population Assessment (CPA) could be merged into the CCA process in order to reduce duplication of efforts. Delegations also expressed their desire that the CCA and UNDAF processes should result in more joint programming by United Nations development organizations.

19. In discussing the trend in core resources of the funds and programmes, delegations pointed out that UNFPA was in a unique situation in that its annual revenues were very much influenced by whether one major donor contributed to the Fund or not. One delegation noted, however, that the Fund's core resources for 2000 represented an increase of 5.1 per cent over the previous year and the number of countries contributing to the Fund had expanded to 102. The same delegation asked for a clarification of "180 degree feedback" appraisals as used in paragraph 15 of document DP/FPA/2001/1 and requested that open meetings on the occasion of mid-term reviews of country programmes be well publicized. The delegation also asked what measures were being taken to ensure the security of the personnel of non-

governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in executing UNFPA programmes in emergency situations.

Response of the Administration

20. In replying to the various comments and questions, the Director of the Strategic Planning and Coordination Division noted that there was no fundamental discrepancy in the views of UNDP and UNFPA concerning the "sunset clauses" of the UNDG working groups: it was a question of whether the glass was seen as half full or half empty. He acknowledged that the goals for completing UNDAFs in 2000 had not been achieved but said that the system had performed remarkably well in finalizing more than 20 UNDAFs and in almost completing 38 more. He strongly concurred with delegations that had emphasized that the CCA and UNDAF processes should result in a greater sense of government ownership of programmes. He stated that the greater degree of joint programming that could result from the CCA and UNDAF processes might entail some modification in the financial rules and regulations of different organizations; that was being examined, he noted.

21. The Director said that the "180 degree feedback" of appraisals meant that field offices were able to comment on the assessments made by headquarters of field reports and that the goal was to ensure mutual feedback into the system. The Director appreciated the comments concerning gender-mainstreaming and the success that UNFPA had had in filling professional posts with women candidates; indeed, at the senior-management level, women represented more than 50 per cent of managers. The Fund would continue to publicize mid-term reviews in order to solicit as much outside involvement as possible. Concerning security, the Director stated that in engaging NGOs to execute UNFPA programmes in emergency situations, the Fund relied on large international NGOs with accumulated experience working in difficult situations. These NGOs necessarily had expertise in ensuring staff security, but this was an important area that the Fund would continue to consider a priority and on which it would continue to work with partner organizations.

22. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) commented on the relationship between the CPAs and the CCAs and UNDAFs. She said that in those situations where CCAs were being developed, the Fund would not duplicate that work by carrying out a separate CPA. However, that made it incumbent on UNFPA to work to ensure that population and reproductive health concerns were reflected in the CCAs and UNDAFs. In that context, she noted that for the UNFPA country programmes submitted to the Executive Board at its current session, it had indeed been possible to reflect CCAs and UNDAFs since a significant number of those mechanisms had recently been completed. She informed the Board that the UNDG working group charged with developing common programming approval processes for UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, chaired by UNFPA, was submitting proposals to UNDG the following month and would be making a presentation to the Board at its next annual session. She pointed out that the proposals would be designed so as not to add to the workload of programme staff.